

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2005

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:45 P.M.

PUBLIC WORK SESSION IMMEDIATELY

FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION

MINUTES

A public work session of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date with the following members present: Mr. Archetto (arrived at 6:55 p.m.), Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Palumbo, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante (arrived at 7:05 p.m.) Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, and Mr. Votto.

Mr. Palumbo convened the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Mr. Scherza noted that Mrs. Ciarlo was ill and that she sent her apologies for not being able to attend this meeting.

It was moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned to Executive Session to discuss personnel pursuant to RI State Law PL 42-46-5(1) and contract and litigation pursuant to PL 42-46-5(2).

Mr. Palumbo reconvened the meeting at 9:24 p.m. for the purposes of conducting a public work session.

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the April 6, 2005 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

I. Proposed Changes to School Committee Policy

Mr. Palumbo stated that each School Committee member had received a copy of the proposed changes to School Committee policy. He asked that each member look over the revisions.

Mr. Traficante explained that he, Ms. Iannazzi, and Mrs. Greifer worked on the proposed changes for several days. They looked at the School Committee policies, and many of them are outdated. Many of the rules and regulations are policy changes and will require 2/3 vote in order to adopt them. They will also require two readings. He said that he would go through the rules and regulations and identify each one with the rule that is being changed.

Mr. Lupino stated that these are rules under which the committee presently operates. Mr. Traficante noted that there were additions to those the committee currently work under. He said they took rules from the General Assembly, City Council, and other cities and towns. Mrs. Greifer added that many of the items are things the committee is presently doing, but they weren't policy. Mr. Traficante stated that in order to update the policy book, the rule has to be identified according to the policy.

Mr. Lupino referred to page 4(b) regarding the public speaking portion. He stated that it sounded nice, but it didn't mean anything. The person speaking at the public session can say whatever they want. It was proven in Tiverton. Mr. Stycos said that the issue there was whether or not one could mention someone's name. The Tiverton School Committee said that the speaker cannot mention the person's name. Mr. Traficante responded that a speaker cannot make personal remarks against another person. There have been meetings where the speaker has gone overboard. Mr. Archetto added that vulgar remarks were made that border on disorderly conduct.

Mr. Traficante commented that Attorney Piccirilli is reviewing these changes.

Mr. Traficante referred to the section regarding tabled resolutions. In the current policy, it states that a tabled resolution can remain on the docket for ten months. He knows of no resolution that would remain

for ten months. Three months should be the maximum. Mrs. Greifer stated that the old policy stated that in the event of a tie vote, the resolution would be tabled. An item would be tabled before voting.

Mr. Traficante said that he would get Mr. Piccirilli's input before the next work session.

Mr. Lupino stated that a previous School Committee voted to have a speaking portion at the beginning and at the end. There are some School Committees, for example Warwick, who have no public speaking portion. They have a public hearing for public input. This committee is allowing public input and preventing the committee from having another meeting. Mr. Palumbo noted that according to the present rules, the School Committee cannot respond to comments made during the public speaking non-agenda portion of a meeting. With regard to the non-agenda speaking portion, Mr. Stycos said that people have a tendency to speak on and on. He said that he had no problem with someone speaking at the end of the meeting with a three-minute limit.

Mrs. Greifer stated that with regard to speaking on agenda items, page 9 (11A). It has been her experience in the past that students attend the meeting to speak. If they are not speaking on an agenda item, they never get to speak because they can't afford to wait until late in the evening. Having spent a lot of years in the audience, this creates extreme frustration for the students and fury on the part of

their parents. She felt that if the students want to come to the meetings and participate, they should be given a limited amount of time such as the three-minute rule. If there are thirty students

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present, the Chairperson should be able to tell them that if they are all present to speak on the same issue, they could all come to the microphone and choose one or two spokesmen to speak. Other than students, everyone else would have to wait until the end of the meeting.

Mr. Traficante stated that the committee would save time with a consent agenda. For every item that goes on the consent agenda, it is up to each committee member to tell the Chairman that they wish to have a resolution pulled and treated as an action item. With regard to personnel resolutions, a committee member can pull an item off for discussion; it then becomes an action item. Mr. Lupino felt it would become cumbersome for the person taking the minutes.

Mr. Traficante commented that this sub-committee was also suggesting in the proposed changes that the secretary or clerk take the roll call for the votes.

Mr. Scherza pointed out that on page 3, Section IV(C) it is stated that all meetings of the committee shall be held in accordance with the

Open Meetings Law. He cited a conflict on page 8 VII (D). A School Committee under the Open Meetings Law cannot add to its agenda. The City Council can, but the law articulates that School Committees cannot add to their agendas. Ms. Iannazzi commented that the committee would be adding it to the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Scherza stated that Attorney Piccirilli should be contacted to check on this law. There was a lengthy discussion regarding items to be placed on the agenda and discussions held at a School Committee meeting.

Mr. Stycos referred to page 3, 4B, rules may be suspended for good cause upon a vote of majority members present. He felt that it should be 2/3 can suspend the rules. It should also be included that 2/3 vote is required to amend the rules.

Mr. Archetto referred to page 8 XII, Section D. Mr. Palumbo stated that a majority of the committee should consent to an item being placed on the agenda. Mrs. Greifer commented that the committee cannot discuss something no matter how many people agree with it if it hasn't been properly placed on the agenda and advertised. Ms. Iannazzi added that the rules call on only two people to call a meeting. They thought it was reasonable for three members to place something on the agenda. Mr. Scherza stated that the committee cannot discuss an item to place it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Traficante commented that the Chair has control of the agenda. If three members of the committee want to call a special meeting or

place something on the agenda, they may do so. The secretary asked if three members can take this action without going through the Chair; Mr. Traficante responded that three members of the committee requested the meeting. Mr. Traficante stated that if three members of the committee want something on the agenda and Mr. Palumbo is adamant about it, it would take three members to call it. The secretary stated that she would present a resolution to Mr. Palumbo first before placing it on the agenda. Ms. Iannazzi added that

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the intent of a resolution is to bring discussion among items that for one reason or another are not going to receive discussion. Mr. Lupino commented that, as a courtesy, any time he submitted a resolution he would copy it to the Superintendent and the Chairperson. Mrs. Greifer stated that the sub-committee was looking out for some future despot. Ms. Iannazzi added that middle school sports should have been debated under a former School Committee, and it was not. Mrs. White refused to put it on the agenda. That is an example of two members calling a meeting, and three members can state they want it on the agenda. The secretary asked if the Chair would be notified, and Ms. Iannazzi responded that every member would be notified of any meeting. Mr. Palumbo cited that three members could put a particular item on the agenda; the majority can vote it down; and the next month those three people can put it back on the agenda. It could be voted down again, and they can continue

to place it on the agenda until some particular time when they can put it through. He cautioned the committee on this action. Mr. Stycos stated that he couldn't see this happening. Mr. Traficante cited the example that Mr. Lupino introduced a resolution and presented it to the Chairman and the Superintendent, and they both disagree and state that it won't appear on the agenda. In order for him to get it on the agenda, he would require two additional members to state in writing asking that it be placed on the agenda. The request would be written to the Chair of the committee.

Mr. Archetto asked if there was a rule that stated a resolution could be introduced once per year if it was voted down, and Mr. Palumbo responded that there was no rule according to these proposals.

The secretary brought up the subject of voting in Executive Sessions and noted that it was stated in the RI education laws that a School Committee could vote in Executive Session on certain items. They would report out the vote in public session. Mr. Stycos stated that the City Charter indicates that the School Committee cannot vote in Executive Session. He added that Mr. Piccirilli indicated previously that state law trumps the City Charter. Mr. Lupino added that Mr. Sidell told the committee this evening that the committee is under special exemption because the committee is guided by state law. Mr. Traficante stated that he didn't recall anyone having an exemption.

Mr. Stycos referred to page 6A, speaking at public work sessions. He

commented that this issue has come up before. He would like to see public speaking at work sessions. He would be amenable to limiting it to items on the work session and to the same time limits established for the regular meeting. He has seen it happen that policy is created at the work sessions, the real practical decisions. The public wants to speak on those issues, and they are not allowed to speak. Then, the decisions are made without hearing from the public. The committee then appears at the regular meeting to listen to

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the public. In reality, the committee is simply going through the motions and not really listening. The secretary will forward the proposed changes to Attorney Piccirilli for his comments.

Moved by Mr. Lupino, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the work session be adjourned.

There being no further business to come before the work session, it was adjourned at

9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony J. Lupino
Clerk